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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/708,919	03/31/2004	Mark C. Boomer	101896-0241	2918

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NUTTER MCCLENNEN & FISH LLP
WORLD TRADE CENTER WEST
155 SEAPORT BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MA 02210-2604

EXAMINER

COMSTOCK, DAVID C

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3733

NOTIFICATION DATE	DELIVERY MODE
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12/31/2008

ELECTRONIC

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

docket@nutter.com

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/708,919	Applicant(s) BOOMER ET AL.	
	Examiner DAVID COMSTOCK	Art Unit 3733	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 10 September 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,2,7-10,13-20,42,43 and 46-50 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 46-50 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,2,8-10,13-16,20,42 and 43 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 7 and 17-19 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 31 October 2007 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

In view of the arguments in the Appeal Brief filed on 10 September 2008, PROSECUTION IS HEREBY REOPENED. New and amended grounds of rejection are set forth below.

To avoid abandonment of the application, appellant must exercise one of the following two options:

(1) file a reply under 37 CFR 1.111 (if this Office action is non-final) or a reply under 37 CFR 1.113 (if this Office action is final); or,

(2) initiate a new appeal by filing a notice of appeal under 37 CFR 41.31 followed by an appeal brief under 37 CFR 41.37. The previously paid notice of appeal fee and appeal brief fee can be applied to the new appeal. If, however, the appeal fees set forth in 37 CFR 41.20 have been increased since they were previously paid, then appellant must pay the difference between the increased fees and the amount previously paid.

A Supervisory Patent Examiner (SPE) has approved of reopening prosecution by signing this action.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1, 2, 9, 13-16, 20, 42 and 43 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Yue (6,007,536).

Yue discloses a device comprising a rod 1 that can be fixed at an angle with respect to a plate 2 by means of a fastening element 4 (see Figs. 1A-1C). The device adjusts in a single plane. The plate includes a female connector having arms that receive a male connector (see Fig. 1B). A bore extends through the male and female connector components to allow rotation about a cylindrical mating element attached to the female connector. The fastening element is mated with the female connector. Both the plate and rod are capable of being implanted and used for spinal applications. Bone screws pass through the device and are capable of being used in the claimed manner. The rod and the screws can be considered to be “for” spinal fixation, since that limitation amounts to a statement of intended use, for which both are capable.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 8 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yue (6,007,536).

With regard to claim 8, Yue discloses the claimed invention except for disclosing that the device could be comprised of rods (or plates) instead of one rod and one plate.

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However, given the disclosure of both a rod and a plate, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art, to have configured the device with two rods (or plates) instead of one rod and one plate, in order to address the exigencies of surgical necessity or patient anatomy.

With regard to claim 10, Yue discloses the claimed invention except for explicitly disclosing different diameters or an offset angle of 90 degrees. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to form the device with differing diameters or with an offset angle of 90 degrees, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 10 September 2008 have been fully considered and are persuasive.

Accordingly, the rejection over Lai has not been maintained. Basically, it cannot reasonably be considered to be an implantable spinal fixation device with spinal fixation screws, etc.

The limitations variously set forth in the claims that the fastener "cause" the connecting features to engage with the mating element, amounts to a product-by-process claim, but the resulting structure (i.e. the elongate members being locked in a fixed position and the fastener at least being part of the structure) is not different

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because of the product. Claims 17-19 were not rejected because the way this limitation is set forth in these claims imparts distinguishing structure thereto.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David Comstock whose telephone number is (571) 272-4710. Please leave a detailed voice message if examiner is unavailable. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eduardo Robert can be reached at (571) 272-4719. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/David Comstock/
Examiner, Art Unit 3733
/Eduardo C. Robert/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3733

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